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House Bill 5666

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee.

My Name is Lois Rosenwald, and I am here today wearing several hats, first and foremost I am a mother of a 30year old man with Aspergers Syndrome (a form of autism). He lives at home with his father and I, although he would love the opportunity to live outside the family home.

Secondly, I'm here as the Executive Director of the Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center a grassroots organization started

11 years ago by families and still operated by families, we have a membership throughout the state.

Lastly, I am serving as the Co-chair of the Steering Committee for the ASD Pilot Program and it is in these last two roles that I will be testifying today.

As Co-chair of the Steering Committee, I must say, I have seldom been involved with a project I have been this proud of. We have been thrilled to watch the growth that has taken place for many of our pilot participants. The use of mentoring/coaching has been a tremendous success, along with the social skills groups that are available. It's been wonderful to see the individual accomplishments of our participants. An example of the power of the program, for me, would be a recent Art Show of many of our participants' work, held at a gallery in New Haven. Many of the folks who exhibited are truly gifted and yet would never have had

this opportunity without the pilot program supports. We have watched them develop better self esteem and growth through this experience. Better self esteem can only lead to good things.

My hope is that we now move this pilot into several other areas of the state so that those anxiously waiting can have some of these same opportunities. The autism community has been waiting way too long, we need to move ahead, offering these necessary services.

As Director of ASRC I speak to frantic parents of adults and teens looking for the necessary services their children will need to reach their full potential. Unfortunately I am often the one that has to tell them those resources are few and far between, and often don't exist at all. This is an unsatisfactory situation. I long for the day our ASD adults have the same opportunities others have.